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ABSTRACT

The interdependence between education and culture is of growing importance. Interest is growing in the relationship between the two, because of the pace of technological change, the effects of social currents, and the decision by the United Nations General Assembly to observe 1988-1997 as the World Decade for Cultural Development. One of the main objectives of education is to prepare the young for integration into society. The school also can serve as a cultural center of a given community, by providing a meeting place and cultural link between teachers, adults, children, and the communities in which they live. Educators can take advantage of the positive effects of the mass media upon society both through the use of educational technology in teaching and through teaching students how to use and critically evaluate the media. Schools can promote cultural awarness and development with the help of cultural and ancillary workers in curricular activities. Education increasingly is taking on the dimension of cultural project, while culture is considered an indispensible tool of education. (SG)

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CONTRIBUTION OF EDUCATION TO CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

"Cultural development through the interaction between education, the community and society in general"

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1. Introductory considerations

The interdependence between education and culture, educational institutions and cultural institutions, teaching staff and cultural workers and educational activities and cultural activities is a topic of growing importance, in which interest has been growing in recent years owing to several factors.

One of the reasons is the imbalance between the speed of change in society - mainly as a result of scientific and technical developments - and the slowness of change in educational and cultural systems (G. Gozzer, 1990). These processes have been increasingly determined and induced by external variables, with the changes affecting man's fate and his place in the universe and in history tending to be left behind. This subordination of qualitative changes to technological developments is more apparent and more negative in its effects in societies and/or social groups which are weaker and more vulnerable to external factors.

Equally detectable are new social currents, which are thrusting from the base and the periphery in the search for an improved and fairer production, distribution and appropriation of educational and cultural goods and services. Nevertheless, the gap is still wide and tending to broaden still further. Among the positive social events connected with education and culture, the following are worth mentioning:

- The establishment of a specialized United Nations organization, UNESCO, charged with fostering and strengthen these aspects of development.
- The creation, in practically all countries, of Ministries of Culture and other authorities responsible for guiding and formulating cultural policies and fostering plans, programmes and projects.
- The development of various international meetings, at world and regional level, at which the representatives of the Member countries have put forward and recommended principles and policies and have agreed multilateral and bilateral cooperation programmes. It is worth mentioning two events, whose expressions have assumed significance as frameworks of reference for cultural and educational development at international level, namely:
  a) The World Conference on Cultural Policies (Mexico City, 1981), whose Final Declaration incorporated the main approaches, tendencies, requirements and principles regarding the dimensions of culture in the development of society and of the individual. At that Conference, the representatives of practically all countries in the world proclaimed that culture constituted a fundamental dimension of the development process and contributed towards strengthening the independence, sovereignty and identity of nations.
  b) The World Conference on EDUCATION FOR ALL - Meeting Basic Learning Needs (Jomtien, Thailand, 1990), whose World Declaration, in the light of the progress achieved, experienced acquired and still unsatisfied requirements, established a set of principles, objectives and guidelines aimed at making the right to education for all, men and women, of all ages and throughout the world a reality.
- Another important event was the decision by the 43rd United Nations General Assembly to proclaim the period 1988-1997 as World Decade for Cultural Development. This Decade, which aims to encourage an awareness of the fundamental importance of culture in the life of human beings and societies and of the fruitful interactions between culture and development, was expressed in terms of four basic objectives, which served as a framework for a Programme of Action under the aegis of UNESCO.

- Similarly, a significant step forward was taken when the 43rd Session of the International Conference on Education decided to analyse "the contribution of education to cultural development".

2. Preparing youth for active participation in cultural life

As stated in the Mexico Declaration, the world has undergone profound changes in recent years. The progress of science and technology has changed man's place in the world and the nature of social relations. This accelerating pace of change has led to new tendencies, which generate crises in society, in its sub-systems, in the institutions which operate them and in the human groups which shape them (M. Mesarovic & E. Pestel, 1974).

Today's Youth has been born, has grown up, has been living and is being educated in a different setting, with different values and paradigms. On the one hand, it has been experiencing the effects of changes occurring in society, especially in terms of values and behaviours (e.g. the family, nationality, work, sex, art); on the other hand, it is a prisoner of still rigid, static educational systems which are out of tune with the changes in society.

In developing countries these universal trends are superimposed on the conditions prevailing in each country or social group (ECLA, UNESCO, UNDP, 1987). These conditions include "the absence of hope or future" of marginal groups, the uncritical and unconscious assimilation of values and behaviours originating in developed countries, through the mass media, a lack or low level of political participation, extreme forms of violence, drug trafficking and even the tendency to emigrate to developed countries. To these factors should be added the tight pedagogic, economic and organizational conditions prevailing in educational systems, which reinforce social inequalities and weaken youth's role as a protagonist in the transformation of present-day society.

To the extent that education is both a cultural project and the expression of a culture, one of the main objectives of schooling and of the teaching-learning process is preparation for suitable integration in society and its various aspects (work, the family, further studies, leisure and relations with other individuals and the natural environment). Some subjects, by their nature, may be expected to contribute more directly to young people's participation in cultural life (e.g. philosophy, history and literature).

The replies to the international survey have been mixed and suggest varied alternatives, raging from the reaffirmation of the value of these social disciplines to the incorporation of scientific and technical disciplines, work in school, morality and even more specific subjects, such as the history of culture itself and religion. It is worth noting that some of the replies place emphasis on the prime importance of the mother tongue.

Perhaps a limitation, from the teaching point of view, of this educational effect of study programmes through disciplines, may arise from an approach to learning in practice based on presence rather than an integrated interdisciplinary concept.

The educational value of individual disciplines depends on the soundness and quality of study programmes, on the capacity for qualitative innovations, on the quality of teaching staff and on the availability of resources for learning. In third world countries, educational systems have grown very quickly in terms of quantity but at low levels of quality and it may be feared that their educational value for cultural life is poor or limited.

A further aspect which is worth noting, when considering the educational value for cultural life of some of the disciplines included in study programmes, is the predominance given to secondary and post-secondary levels. For both psycho-pedagogical and cultural reasons, it is clear that all levels of education play a decisive part in these processes, even though the objectives and characteristics of each one are different. In actual fact, initial education and more especially basic education provide the only opportunity in more than half the countries of the third world to accede to formal education.

Apart from formal curricular activities, there are other ways and possibilities, by means of which schools and adult education centres can stimulate and prepare young people to take a direct part in the cultural life of their communities. In fact, informal activities and types of work (e.g. art and science museums, theatre groups, choirs, journals and school reviews, literature clubs, art competitions and science exhibitions, school tourism etc.) not only appear to be often better accepted by students, but they also establish a more direct relation with the life of communities, both during and after the passage of young people through schooling.

This may be explained not only by purely educational reasons (by the motivation of students and the possibility for developing their potential, or the closer links between learning and the real life of communities etc.), but also by the possibility that such activities may be supported economically or with other resources by families and community organizations.

The following conclusions may be drawn from the above:

a) The preparation of children and young people in schools for cultural life, through so-called "social or scientific" disciplines, should be maintained as an educational objective, though not to any exclusive or predominant extent, but rather as part of an interdisciplinary efforts at integration, combining both traditional disciplines and new inputs and disciplines, such as the mother tongue, anthropology, science, religion, working practices etc.

b) Extracurricular activities can play a complementary educational role for the cultural life of the community. A number of countries and institutions have already initiated some very useful projects in this respect, such as:

- centres and museums for the natural sciences and the arts, located both inside and outside schools;
- school theatricals, of different types and tendencies;
- literary and journalist activities in schools (literature clubs, reviews, journals, poetry recitals, etc.);
- school tourism, especially with scientific and/or artistic objectives;
- musical activities, related both to the universal musical heritage and to native folklore;
- the development of productive projects in schools, especially handicrafts and others related to culture and environmental values.

c) With the accelerated growth and spread of present-day knowledge, the school is tending to lose its role of preserving and transmitting knowledge to become instead a collector of information, systematizing and processing experience and disseminating results, in addition to educating human beings.

3. The school as a cultural centre for the community

The school has been traditionally portrayed and criticized as a rigid, closed type of institution. This criticism levelled at the traditional school (Ivan Illich, 1971) has not changed it significantly, but it has given rise to theories concerned with curricula, greater recognition for informal and out-of-school education, and approaches which link schools more directly with the needs and problems of the environment and community life.

One strategy is to make the school into the cultural centre of the community. In isolated, poor environments, such as the rural communities in the majority of developing countries, the school is still a meeting place for the community, and the schoolmaster - despite the social deterioration of his social image - is still a prominent community figure. Cultural rather than purely educational activities provide a centre of attraction, a meeting place and a cultural link between teachers, adults and children and the communities in which they live. In indigenous groups, the school and the community are closely related (L. Montaluisa, 1988).

In the more densely populated urban areas, the school's importance as a cultural centre is tending to diminish, especially in the middle and upper social sectors. In these cases the school competes and shares this role with the mass media and with institutions, programmes and groups engaged in supplying cultural and recreational services (either free of charge or on a paying basis).

In the major cities of the industrialized countries, there can be a fairly close relationship between educational supply and demand, with the school maintaining a more formal relation with its environment or community, not necessarily through cultural activities. Common features in such cases are ghettos and ethnic or emigrant minorities with cultural characteristics and needs which differ from those of the normal population groups.

In developing countries, townships are the effect of a vertiginous and still chaotic process of urbanization, where the prevailing social stratification is reflected and reproduced (with upper class, middle class, popular and marginal neighbourhoods or areas, each with their different types of educational and cultural services).

In small townships, whether in developed or in developing countries - though each in their own way - there is a closer relationship between educational and cultural centres and the surrounding communities. Here the school provides a relatively significant centre of cultural development.

In marginal urban sectors, the school can play an important part in favouring social cohesion and helping immigrants to adopt to complex, hard urban reality. In these sectors, the lack of "urban" cultural services combines with the inherent economic limitations and the nature of marginal urban populations to restrict access to cultural activities to a considerable extent. These human groups, in most of the major townships, make up about a third or more of the total population.

According to the replies given to the international survey, in practically all countries there is a significant regularity of some types of activities performed by the school for the community. It is worth noting the importance which schools attach to their participation in literacy or environmental protection activities and to their cooperation, in different forms, with cultural events in the communities.

It is also worth noting the scope and the limitations of the schools' commitment to literacy and adult education activities (Coombs, Phillip H., 1985), especially in developing countries. In most countries, this follows compulsory standards, which reflect the importance attached to the elimination of illiteracy, especially through literacy campaigns or crusades. The impact of some experiments - such as those of China, Cuba and Nicaragua - is often mentioned, with an emphasis on the role played by school youth brigades or groups, although in most countries this work followed a more formal, more school-related approach, so that the results are more uneven and less apparent. Nevertheless, the educational value of the participation by young people in literacy work has been recognized. It would appear that the school's potential for reducing illiteracy and providing basic education for marginal children and young people has not been sufficiently exploited.

In practically all parts of the world, the growing importance and participation of schools in environmental protection activities, starting from the pre-school and primary school level, have been very noticeable. This positive trend would appear to have achieved more than attempts to include ecology as a subject in formal school study programmes, without running the risk of overloading study programmes unnecessarily or losing flexibility in the process.

The participation of school children and young people in activities for the preservation of the environment and natural resources is more essential in developing countries, where more than 90 per cent of all exports come from the soil or subsoil - in the form of either raw materials or agricultural produce - apart from their immediate effects on the students, heads of families and on their communities.

Another front of present and future significance, which the school can develop as a cultural community activity, is the dissemination of scientific knowledge, insofar as scientific and technical changes are already a part of culture and generate "scale cultures". This type of activity improves the scientific training of students and helps to bring communities closer to the advances of science and technology (E. Gelpi, 1990).

The school's socio-cultural action fronts in the community are not supposed to detract from the traditional type of cultural activities, considering the latter's spiritual and humanistic value. In an increasingly complex world, more and more urbanized and impersonal, artistic and recreational activities constitute one of the main avenues towards spiritual growth, social cohesion and human coexistence. Perhaps in the very new future, a greater effort will have to be made to explore the potential of other forms of cultural and social life. Community activities in school will also need to be developed, with a view to strengthening values such as peace, tolerance, human coexistence and the respect for human rights.

The following conclusions may be drawn from the above considerations.

a) The cultural dimension of the school, seen as an activity centre of the community or social environment in which it operates, should constitute in the future one of the driving forces of school life and of its social dimension. To achieve this, educational policies in the future will need to take account of this prospect as the most realistic way of adapting the school to its environment and as one of the most appropriate mechanisms for the cultural development of communities.

b) It should be assumed that all cultural activities in schools can have multiple effects, such as strengthening, consolidating and renovating formal learning processes, adding greater flexibility to structures and programmes, enriching school work through greater contact with reality, adding a social dimension to the life of students and teachers, reinforcing the synergetic work of the educational community and attributing to culture its fundamental dimension in the development of society.

4. The effects of the mass media on students

The magnitude and the spread of the mass communication media in present-day society is one of the most significant social factors of the modern world. One of the most controversial issues concerns their ethical-cultural impacts on childhood and youth, their psycho-pedagogical effects and their inherent educational potential. There are various angles and dimensions to this phenomenon which have been extensively studied and debated in the developed countries, giving rise to sometimes contradictory opinions. These media, insofar as they constitute a cultural factor in themselves and provide a vehicle for the dissemination of cultural events and values, produce effects on learners, not only from a strictly cultural point of view but also in ethical-social terms and in relation to scientific training.

There are clearly positive sides to the mass communication media, the benefits of which depend on ends and uses. The most frequently mentioned advantages refer to the speed of delivery of information, to the constant updating of their content compared with education, to the broad coverage they afford, which allows them with ease to reach isolated places and populations, the possibility they offer of achieving a certain degree of nationwide homogeneity or acceptance of different cultural forms, the attractiveness of sound and pictures, the complementary support value for the work of teaching staff, etc. Of course there are more specifically pedagogic effects of the influence of the communication media, including the following:

- The contents of learning provided by schools can concentrate on substantive aspects of scientific and moral training, leaving the communication media the role of supplying purely informative facts and vulgarizing knowledge.
- The school teacher's role could undergo substantial changes to become more one of a guide to learning and a facilitator of the process.
- Teaching methods can evolve, from a practice based on rigid texts, classroom teaching and additive evaluations to school work more centred on self-study, the pupil's learning rhythms, a flexible choice of contents according to students' interests and motivations and educational self-evaluation.
- The organization of schools can also be changed, becoming more flexible, less authoritarian, more participative, more centred on the student and less tied to the strict application of regulations.

The most frequently mentioned negative aspects to emerge from the survey were the following:

- The powerful influence of the media, which filter knowledge and information, at times distorting them.
- The prevalence of commercial criteria over those related to the common good.
- The indiscriminate and uncritical transfer of cultural values and behaviour patterns which are foreign to the receiving home cultures.
- The encouragement of passive and receptive attitudes among users, to the detriment of intellectual development, reasoning and thoughtful analysis.
- The risks of ideological and political manipulation by those who control the media.
- The superficiality of messages and information, to the detriment of a scientifically sound vision, built up through study and research.

Although many studies have been made on the subject in developed countries, not much has been done in the developing countries, which makes it more difficult to evaluate more accurately the balance of benefits and limitations.

On an international level, two approaches have emerged to take advantage of the potential offered by the media and to limit any negative effects. The first is based on the use of Educational Technology, which is an attempt to transfer to the educational field some of the benefits of industrial technology, with a view eventually to increasing coverage and reducing the costs of teaching.

The second approach consists in including a component in teaching programmes, intended to educate children and young people in the use of these media. The few positive replies received in the international survey illustrate the sort of importance given to and experience gained in the field.

The first approach has led educationalists to develop more specific studies, from the theoretical and methodological point of view, concerning the use of technology in education and the actual design of alternative forms of organization, such as remote education.

The second approach is creating a greater awareness in teachers of the need to develop in students a more critical and selective mentality regarding the contents and scope of messages transmitted by the mass communication media. This could turn out to be as significant as the introduction of specific subjects or courses.

5. Intersectoral and interinstitutional coordination and cooperation for the community's cultural development

It is worth emphasizing the fact that the general tendency where cultural activities attracting greater participation are concerned is in favour of those which involve schools bringing culture to the community, with fewer cases being reported where cultural workers either participate or intervene in school activities. This may be explained by the closed nature of schools and by the difficulties inherent in any participation in school activities on the part of cultural institutions and operators.

If one considers that the majority of creative artistic and cultural activities generally originate outside the educational system, it is easy to see why schools usually lose the opportunity to use this resource for the development of cultural knowledge and attitudes in teachers and the guidance of cultural activities in schools.

Even though any effective and productive involvement of cultural and ancillary workers in formal curricular activities is not easy to establish, through the teaching of disciplines or courses, the experience of some countries (e.g. India's report) shows that, apart from being possible, this can yield positive effects by bringing art and culture creators into the schools, thus strengthening the latter's cultural capacity and broadening their cultural horizons.

The range of possible co-workers available in communities to take part with schools in the development of cultural activities is usually quite broad. It could be that culture is one field which, on a community level, can bring together and combine a greater number of co-participants, from both state bodies and from private institutions and non-governmental organizations.

The school is usually flanked by potential resources for cultural development, the deployment of which will depend above all on the ability, creativity and leadership of educational and cultural institutions. Thus apart from the internal actions and resources which the school can deploy in favour of cultural activities, the surrounding potential can also be harnessed. The development of these activities will then have a multiplier effect, from savings gained on resources to a projection of the school within the community.

The above reflects an intersectoral and interinstitutional approach to appropriate community development strategies, which can take the form either of comprehensive community development plans and projects (which include educational and cultural features) or through specific agreements relating to definite programmes.

The concept of "community" is obviously not the same everywhere. The word can cover systems ranging from the most structured and cohesive (such as NGOs, clubs, committees, foundations, associations or cooperatives), to the most general forms of organization (such as urban neighbourhoods, geographically limited population units, ethnic communities and religious groups, etc). Clearly the best possibilities for intersectoral and interinstitutional work will arise in a more coherent and systematic form in communities with some level of organization and cohesion.

6. Implications for the planning and administration of education and culture

Among the tendencies which may be observed in the recent development of education and culture and the prospects which are emerging in the medium and longer term, one of the constant features appears to be a closer link between education and culture. Education is increasingly taking on the dimension of a cultural project by society, while culture is considered to be an indispensable tool of education, particularly in relation to permanent education.

World conferences on cultural and educational policies for all have expressed the need to deploy efforts to plan, administer and finance cultural and educational activities. As far as the role of planning and administration in the task of strengthening the interaction between educational and cultural development is concerned, a few aspects are worth noting:

- In the first place, it appears that education, and, to a lesser extent, culture have never been short of diagnoses and plans, or of responsible institutional units, or qualified staff, or of appropriate theories and methods. In some cases, it is probably true to say that there has been even a certain "oversaturation" of diagnoses and plans. What has been missing on occasions is a lack of realism in the way they are expressed - owing to political and financial restrictions - and above all a limited scope for implementation and continuity.
- On the other hand, all international, regional and national organizations, as well as the actual training and research institutions, have attached little importance to problems of administration, management and organization. These shortcomings may be observed as much at the highest decision-making levels as in the running of teaching institutions.

Some of the possible strategies which could be followed in the short or medium term in these areas could include the following:

1) In some countries with a strictly centralist tradition, decentralization has been proceeding at a fast pace, which gives them a greater possibility of action at the intermediate and lower levels (i.e. by municipalities, communities and institutions). This trend, which is part of a deep-seated social move towards the democratization of society, favours the cultural development of the community, while making the possibilities of interaction between development and culture for the benefit of the communities both more viable and more effective.
2) Planning needs a reformulation of its paradigms and practices in order to become a real "strategic pilot" of educational and cultural development (S. Lourié, 1989). These problems have already been the subject of much debate (J.Guriarán, 1990) and it is only worth emphasizing the following points:
   a) Planning action must be centred on the appropriate identification and formulation of educational and cultural policies.

b) Encouragement must be given to building up information systems, which back up decision-making in the right way and at the right time and strengthen educational processes.

c) Research must be stimulated as a means of facilitating innovation and reform at all levels.

d) Forecasts should be stimulated, as a means of anticipating events, scenarios and impacts, so that the appropriate decisions affecting the future destinies of children and young people can be taken now.

3) More emphasis on improving the administration and management of education and culture,especially at institutional level, with special regard to the improvement of analytical, technological and management capacities. This assumes the need for actions to reorganize educational and cultural systems (at centralized, intermediate and local level), the systematic training and further training of those in charge and the search for administration and management paradigms, models and strategies.

4) Considering that most developing countries are currently submerged in a deep economic crisis, which substantially affects the allocation of financial resources to education and culture, it is essential to encourage efforts to rationalize and optimize the resources available either internally or outside, as well as the search for new resources, mainly within the communities themselves.

Against the background these considerations, the following questions may be asked:

- What would be an appropriate way of organizing educational and cultural policies, plans and projects within a given country, at national, regional and intermediate, or local and institutional level?
- What should be the components and links within a national system of education and culture?
- In present circumstances, what would be a possible level of financing for education and culture, in terms of its share of GDP and public expenditure, in the developing countries?
- How can official financial resources be supplemented with those of the private sector to finance education and culture?
- What strategies could be implemented to improve the management and organization of educational and cultural services at a central, intermediate, local or institutional level?

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